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# Thread of Love: Exploring the Timeless Wedding Traditions of Punjab's Sikh Community Across the Borders

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## ABSTRACT

This research paper provides an in-depth analysis of the various facets of Sikh marriage customs, clarifying their intricate cultural, religious, and legal aspects. Within the socio-cultural contexts of Punjab, both in Pakistan and India, this study examines the diverse range of customs that influence Sikh marriage rituals. These customs, which have their roots in Sikh religious and cultural traditions, function as a microcosm of Sikh identity and solidarity among the community. The first section of the essay traces the historical development of Sikh marriage customs, outlining its inception and ensuing modifications. It shows how these rituals have changed significantly as a result of a variety of causes, including migration, globalization, and modernity. This research utilizes an interdisciplinary methodology, merging legal analysis with ethnographic observations to offer a comprehensive comprehension of the topic. This study's emphasis on the legal system controlling Sikh weddings in Punjab, both in Pakistan and India, is one of its most notable aspects. It looks at laws and their revisions that recognize and safeguard these distinctive marriage customs. This essay discusses the Anand Marriage Act in India and the corresponding legislation in Pakistan, demonstrating the significant role that these laws have played in giving Sikh marriages legitimacy and protection. Additionally, the influence of theological convergence and cultural fusion on Sikh marriage customs is critically examined in this research. It contends that although the central ideas of these incidents have not changed, their periphery has undergone subtle hybridization as a result of influences from the larger socio-cultural context. All things considered, the study work makes a significant addition to the body of knowledge on Sikh marriage customs. It not only broadens our comprehension of the intricate interactions of culture, religion, and law, but it also creates new opportunities for future study in an understudied field. This research transforms the conversation on Sikh weddings from ceremonial activities to a significant social, cultural, and legal phenomena through its careful analysis and perceptive observations.

**Key Words:** Anand Marriage, Globalisation, India, Modernisation, Pakistan, Punjab, Rituals, Sikhism.

## **Introduction**

Punjab, which lies in Pakistan and India, has a rich historical and cultural legacy. Punjab is located in the northwest of the Indian subcontinent. The Persian terms "panj," which means "five," and "aab," which means "water," are the source of the name "Punjab." The Beas, Chenab, Jhelum, Ravi, and Sutlej are the five rivers that traverse the area; these are referenced in the name. This lush land has been the birthplace of civilization for innumerable millennia, enduring the rise and fall of several civilizations and acting as a crossroads for a wide range of cross-cultural relationships.

The Sikh community is the largest and most influential in Punjab in terms of both religion and culture. Established by Guru Nanak Devji in the fifteenth century, Sikhism became a separate religious movement in the Punjab area. Its tenets of social justice, equality, and fidelity to the teachings of the Guru Granth Sahib and the ten Sikh Gurus set it apart (Bradley 1982).

The Sikh community in Punjab places an abundance of significance on their customary marriage ceremonies. These rites represent the ideals, beliefs, and legacy of the Sikh community in addition to symbolizing the union of two persons. In Sikh tradition, the marriage ceremony, called Anand Karj, is highly revered since it symbolizes the spiritual union of two souls in the presence of the Guru Granth Sahib.

In the Sikh culture, marriage is highly valued since it is the basis for social and cultural harmony. Sikhism is a religion that originated in Punjab, India, in the fifteenth century. It emphasizes the value of community, family, and the sacrament of marriage as a means of uniting two souls. Sikh marriage customs encompass more than merely commemorating a couple's love and dedication to one another. They also help to maintain cultural identity and improve ties within the community.

The term "Ananda Karj" means "joyful union" or "joyful ceremony" and is a central idea in Sikhism. The sacred text of the Sikh faith, the Guru Granth Sahib, is present during the Anand Karj, a Sikh marriage ritual. It is essential to Sikh marriage customs and represents the joining of two souls in the divine presence (Chowdhary 2016).

In the Sikh community, marriage is highly valued, and wedding customs especially the Anand Karj ceremony are crucial to preserving cultural identity and building community bonds. These customs promote the ideals of love, equality, and dedication while offering chances for intergenerational communication and group participation. Sikhs in Punjab, Pakistan and India, preserve their cultural legacy and foster social harmony within their society via the celebration of marriage.

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## **A Brief Introduction of Sikh Religion**

Guru Nanak Dev Ji was the founder and first Guru of Sikh Religion. Based on Guru Granth the Sacred book of Sikh religion, Guru Nanak Sahib began a spiritual and societal revolution that was carried on by the nine Gurus. The goal was to shift, transform traditional faith-based living into an intellectually based, enlightened, and realised living. The equality of humanity in all aspects of life served as the cornerstone for the reformation. The supreme aim of a just and equal society would require many lifetimes to be accomplished, according to Guru Nanak Sahib, the master strategist. The first Gurmat training university was established at Kartarpur as part of his strategic goals. From 1531 until 1539, training took place here, but selection was done on the basis of merit (K. Singh and Smith 2007) . History attests that Bhai Lehna shown he possessed every virtue. Additionally, Guru Ji established manjis and appointed both male and female missionaries to lead them. The revolution that resulted in the growth of gender equality and, as a result, marriage and family obligations was driven by the strategic change process in conjunction with a well-designed training programme for succession.

## **An Insight Into Sikh Wedding Rituals**

They are not said to be husband and wife, who merely sit together. They alone are called husband and wife, who have one light in two bodies. (Talib 1987). Marriage is not only a relationship between a man and woman but rather it is a relationship between two families in a society. Consolidating this relationship, religious and social factors simultaneously take place in the form of rituals, and finally the beautiful combination of these two factors give rise to a new and beautiful relationship. Although the social rituals may be different in every society, the religious rituals always remain the same. Sikhs live on both sides of the border the border in Pakistan and Indian Punjab, and that is why their wedding ceremonies are almost same except for a few rituals which are natural to be different because of difference of society. Sikh weddings are also unique in the sense that despite the modernity, you will see a unique colour in it following the old traditions and rituals, the summary of which you will observe further in this paper.

## **Pre-Wedding Rituals in the Sikh Community: A Tapestry of Tradition and Culture**

Sikh weddings are not just about the grandeur of the wedding day itself; they are a culmination of a series of meaningful pre-wedding rituals that carry deep cultural and historical significance. These rituals bring together families, strengthen bonds, and mark the journey of the couple into a lifelong union (N. Kaur 2018). Among

the pre-wedding rituals observed in the Sikh community are the Roka (engagement ceremony), Kurmai (official ceremony before the wedding), and Chunni Chadai (gift-giving ceremony).

### **Roka (Engagement Ceremony)**

The bride and groom's family meet together during Roka to exchange gifts, which are typically candies, fruits, and dry fruits. In addition, the prospective couple exchanges rings as a sign of their union. Roka is significant in culture since it marks the approval of both families and the formal start of wedding planning. It developed historically as a means of fostering harmony and avoiding any disputes or miscommunications between the two families.

### **Kurmai (Official Ceremony before the Wedding)**

In Sikh marriages, the Karmai ceremony, also called the Shagan ceremony, is a significant pre-wedding custom. The bride's family pays the groom's family a visit to complete the marriage preparations during a ceremonial ceremony. The bride receives gifts from the groom's family during this event, which often consists of apparel, jewelry, and candies. Giving and receiving presents is a symbol of approbation and consent for a union. Karmai is a representation of the customary honor and respect that Sikh families hold dear, in addition to being a symbol of mutual consent. It prepares the two families for the wedding day and deepens their relationship.

### **Akhand Path**

“Akhand Path” can refer to a congregational worship. In this, the elder members of the Groom's and Bride's families recite the Guru Granth Sahib separately within 48 hours. The purpose of this congregational worship is to pray for a prosperous life for the newly married couple and to live their married life according to Sikh religion in the Light of the Holy Book. This practice of recitation of Guru Granth Sahib is practiced across the World wherever Sikh community residing (H. Singh n.d.).

### **Ardas (Prayer)**

Usually, two or three days before the wedding, the families of the Bride and Groom go to the Gurdwara for prayers. There they open any page of their religious book Guru Granth Sahib, recite aloud and teaches. The purpose of this special ritual is to pray for the safety of their faith and a happy married life for the new couple.

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**Chunni Chadai (Gift-Giving Ceremony)** The Chunni Chadai ceremony is a delightful pre-wedding ritual that takes place a day or two before the wedding. In this ceremony, the groom's family presents a beautiful bridal outfit (chunni or dupatta) to the bride. The chunni is placed over the bride's head by her future sister-in-law or another female member of the groom's family.

This ceremony holds significant cultural and emotional value. It symbolizes the bride's acceptance into her new family and showcases the love and affection of the groom's family towards her. The chunni also represents blessings and good wishes for her future ('Articles | Sikh Research Institute (SikhRI)' n.d.).

## **Mehndi**

One day before the big day, the bride's hands, feet, and palms are covered with Heena paste while the Heena artists create beautiful patterns on them. The bride's mother-in-law used to send this henna paste according to old customs, but today, family members purchase it from the market. The bridegroom and his family also apply this Heena on the palms and have a wonderful evening of celebration.

Vatna

In Punjabi weddings, the Haldi ceremony is referred to as Vatna, much like other cultures' wedding customs. The bride and groom are covered in a paste made of turmeric and mustard oil in their respective houses. During this Vatna tradition, the family members and all the guests attend the bride and groom's home while dressed in yellow costumes.

## **Ghara Ghardoli**

Following the Haldi or Vatna ritual, the bride goes to a local temple where her female siblings give her a drink of well-water. She then goes into the temple's innermost sanctuary to ask the gods for their heavenly blessing on her marriage. The bridegroom's sister-in-law brings water to his house so he can take a ceremonial bath. At the Ghara Ghardoli wedding, a clay pitcher is utilised.

Chhuda Chhadhana

The bride's house is where the most important rite of a Punjabi wedding takes place. There is a "hawan puja" organised, in which every member of the family takes part. After it is finished, the bride's maternal uncle presents her with a set of 21 crimson bangles.

The bride's maternal uncle and aunt help her put on the Chuudaa set after it has been cleansed in milk and rose petal solutions. The bride is not permitted to see her Chuudaa during this ritual since doing so is unlucky. The family members completely envelop them in a white cloth. Chuudaa is worn for a month after the wedding by brides who adhere to their elaborate wedding customs. Before the bride wears the Chuudaa, her family members touch it to bestow abundant

blessings on her wedding. The morning of the bride's big day is dedicated to this ceremony.

### **Jaggo or Jago Ceremony**

"Wake up" is the intended meaning of Jaggo. The bride's and groom's maternal families both participate in the celebration. The relatives make a grand entrance at the wedding location. They dance and sing as well. The female relatives sing and dance while carrying a gagger, a painted earthen pot lighted with candles. People dance while holding an earthen pot and a decorated pole with bells attached. A day or two before the wedding, Jago is held (Myrvold 2004).

Jaago nights are now viewed as a chance for creativity. Siblings and friends of the bride or groom frequently don humorous or traditional Punjabi attire. Epic Events rents out authentic Punjabi lenghas. The purpose of the evening is to generate noise and celebrate, thus in addition to carrying jaagos (pots decorated with lights), decorated sticks (jaago sticks) will be hammered on the ground, and even a chaj would be banged (as shown in the picture). Families from the mother's and father's sides frequently engage in playful folk song exchanges. Families frequently rent tents or marquees for jaago nights that are held at their residences. To intensify the party vibe, DJs are also reserved.

### **Nanki Chakk (gifts from maternal side)**

In this ceremony, the bride typically receives gifts from her mother's side of the family, along with her bridal attire and jewellery. Nowadays, it is customary for the Nanki Chhakk to occur the day before the wedding in Punjabi marriages. The girl known as nanaki chhakk receives presents from the nanake during this ritual. These could include "ivory" bracelets, a nose ring, and a set of clothing, a collection of ornaments, as well as various tools and items for the home. Clothing for the bride's parents and siblings may be included in the presents. Additionally, the boy receives gifts from his maternal family group. Clothing for the bridegroom, his parents, siblings, and mother's brother are among them. Although this custom is frequent at Punjabi weddings, the Sikh Rehat Maryada advises against giving them any weight.

### **Sehrabandi and Varna**

The groom's family organises a Sehrabandi puja before the major wedding day ceremonies begin. The family members assist him in this process by tying a Sehra, Pagdi, and Headgear that can completely enclose his face. Before the groom enters the wedding, the family members bless him.

The groom's sister applying Kajal or Surma on the groom's eyes is a simple yet significant grooming practise. This safeguards the groom from any malicious

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intent and prepares him for travelling to the bride's home. Following the Sehrabandi ceremony is this wedding custom.

**Vaag Phrai (holding the reins)**

According to the background of vaag Pharai ritual in the Punjabi weddings, when the bridegroom rides a mare to go to the Bride's house, the groom's sisters hold the reins and demand for money. The Bridegroom gives money to each of sisters; this is known as vaag pharai. A younger brother or nephew of the groom is positioned behind him on the mare as the procession begins, serving as best man (sarvaha). At this moment the sisters sing the Punjabi cultural songs;

*“de ja way de ja veera vaag phadai  
Tera wasda rahwy dawara  
Ni veer mera ghorī charya”*

O Brother, give us the money for holding the reins (vaag phadai). May your house always be full of peace. Our brother is riding a horse as a groom.

**Regional Variations**

While these pre-wedding rituals are observed across the Sikh community, there may be regional variations and nuances. For instance, the specific customs, timing, and significance of each ritual may vary in different Sikh subcultures and regions. In some cases, families may choose to combine or modify these rituals to suit their preferences while still upholding the core values and traditions of Sikh weddings (Thandi 2016).

The pre-wedding rituals in the Sikh community are not mere formalities; they are a testament to the rich cultural heritage, strong family ties, and the spirit of unity and respect that define Sikh weddings. These rituals, with their historical origins and regional variations, create a beautiful tapestry of tradition and culture that sets the stage for the grand celebration of love and commitment on the wedding day.

**Anand Karaj: The Sacred Sikh Wedding Ceremony**

The Anand Karaj, often referred to as the "blissful union" or "joyful ceremony," is the sacred Sikh wedding ceremony that symbolizes the spiritual union of two souls in the presence of the Guru Granth Sahib, the holy scripture of Sikhism. As mentioned in Guru Granth ;

*“They alone are called husband and wife who have  
one light in two bodies”.*(Talib 1987)

This profound ceremony is characterized by its deep spiritual significance, emphasis on equality, and its unique rituals that reflect the core values of Sikhism. Sikh Weddings are usually held in Gurdawara (the religious place), where the Granthi initiate the marriage ceremony at a specific location with the permission of Gurdwara authority. In the absence of Gurdwara, The marriage ceremony can be performed in the presence of all the accessories in a special prayer room in the house (Kandhari 2021).

### **Components of the Anand Karaj Ceremony and Their Symbolic Meanings:**

#### **Guru Granth Sahib:**

The guru Granth Sahib is the religious book of Sikhism, which provides guidance and way of living to its followers. The Guru Granth Sahib was written by Guru Arjan Dev Ji. It is also known as “Adi Granth” and contains the teachings of the founder of Sikh Religion Guru Nanak Sahib and four other Gurus. The Guru Granth Sahib plays a central role in the Anand Karaj ceremony. It is placed on a raised platform (palki or takht) covered with fine fabric and adorned with flowers. The Guru Granth Sahib represents the spiritual guide and witness to the union. Its presence emphasizes that the marriage is not just a social contract but a spiritual bond guided by Sikh teachings.

#### **Granthi (Religious Officiator)**

The Granthi, a trained Sikh priest, officiates the ceremony. The Granthi is responsible for reciting hymns, conducting the ceremony, and guiding the couple and congregation through the rituals. The presence of the Granthi ensures the authenticity and sanctity of the ceremony. The Granthi then recites "Hukamnamah," a randomly selected passage from Sri Guru Granth Sahib, is read aloud, who is also the granthi of Sri Guru Granth Sahib. The granthi advises the couple of their future obligations to one another, their families, and society in accordance with Sikh ideals of equality.

#### **Ardas (Prayer)**

The families offers a communal prayer known as “ardas” at the start of Ananda Karj. It asks for the Guru Granth Sahib's blessings for the couple's future together. The couple's journey is acknowledged by the prayer as having the support and participation of the Sikh community. It represents the pair's determination to conduct their life in accordance with Sikh values.



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### **Laavan (Four Wedding Hymns)**

Reciting four Lavans, or wedding hymns, from the Guru Granth Sahib is the core of Anand Karj. Guru Ramdasji wrote these hymns that depict a married couple's spiritual path. Lavan stresses ideas like harmony, faith, and heavenly love. The pheres (circling the Guru Granth Sahib) in a Sikh wedding are referred to as "lawans" and are often four in number. The union of "Atma" (the Bride) and "Paramatma" (the Groom) is referred to as "Lavan" in spiritual terminology. A poem explaining the various stages of conjugal love and the significance of marriage is included with each phira (Balakrishnan n.d.)

- **First Laav:** The first Laav emphasises the value of faith and commitment to God and represents the beginning of the couple's spiritual journey.

*"Har pahldi lav parviri karam dridaya Bal Ram jio..."*

The Lord offers you His guidelines for married life in the first round of the wedding ceremony. Adopt the virtuous Dharma-based way of living and avoid everything that might distance you from God instead of doing rituals on a regular basis. Think about God's name. Accept and practise simran, which is the ongoing recalling of your True Identity. Worship the Guru, the Perfect True Guru, and all of your past transgressions will be erased. Your big destiny will allow you to experience unfathomable joy and make the Lord—Har, Har—sweet to your mind. The marriage ritual has started in this first round, says Servant Nanak.

- **Second Laav:** The second Laav represents the couple's dedication to spiritual development and acceptance of the Guru's advice.

*"Har dooji lav Satgur purukh milaya Bal Ram jio..."*

The Lord leads you to meet the True Guru—the One Teacher—during the second phase of the marriage ritual. Your ego vanishes in the presence of the infinite's awe. Sing His Wonderful Praise in amazement of the One who is always pure, and you will perceive God in everything. The Lord, also known as the Supreme Soul, is the universe's ruler. He fills every available space. He occupies every open space. See only one God, both inside and outside of you. When the servants of God gather, they sing ecstatic and joyful melodies. The music of the spheres is once again audible in this second cycle, says Servant Nanak.

- **Third Laav:** The significance of selflessness and shared love in a marriage is emphasised in the third Laav.

*"Har teejdi lav man chao bhiya bairagiya Bal Ram jio..."*

### *Muhammad Babar & Qurat Ul Ain Cheema*

In the third phase of the marriage ritual, Divine Love fills your heart. By the grace of God, I have encountered the lowly Saints who love the Lord and have discovered God. I have discovered the holy Lord, and I exalt Him with great praise. I hum the Bani of the Guru. I have encountered the lowly Saints by the grace of God, and I communicate with them in the inaudible language of the Infinite. My heart is filled with the vibration and echo of the Lord's Name, Har, Har, Har. I've become aware of the huge destiny etched on my forehead when I meditate on God. According to Servant Nanak, "the heart is full of Divine Love of the One God in this third round.

- **Fourth Laav:** The fourth Laav emphasises the couple's eternal relationship and serves as the conclusion of their spiritual union.

*"Har choutdi lav man sahaj bhiya Har paiya Bal Ram jio..."*

I found God in the fourth round of the wedding ceremony, and my mind is at ease. As a Gurmukh, I have encountered Him with ease. My body and mind are both filled with wonderful bliss. I love to lovingly direct my mind towards God since I am pleasing to Him. All of my desires have been realised since I have joined with the One in everyone. Within and all around me, the Lord's Name echoes and reverberates. My Lord and Master, the One God, becomes one with His Divine Bride, and His Holy Naam causes her heart to blossom. In this fourth circle, according to Servant Nanak, we have united with the Eternal Lord.

As each Laav is recited, the bride and groom circumambulate the Guru Granth Sahib, taking four rounds to symbolize their journey through these stages of spiritual growth and unity.

#### **Exchange of Garlands (Jaimala)**

During the Anand Karaj, the bride and groom exchange garlands as a symbol of acceptance and respect for each other. This ritual represents the mutual consent of the couple to enter into a sacred partnership and acknowledges their willingness to embrace each other's presence in their lives.

#### **Tying of the Ceremonial Knot (Palla)**

The groom tying the bride's chunni (veil) end to his safa (turban) is a significant moment in Anand Karaj. This gesture represents comradery, harmony, and unwavering dedication. Chini is a symbol for a bride's readiness to take on new duties and go through life with her spouse.

The Anand Karaj is a profound and deeply spiritual Sikh wedding ceremony. Its components and rituals, including the recitation of the Laavan, the exchange of garlands, the tying of the ceremonial knot, and the presence of the Guru Granth Sahib and Granthi, all hold symbolic meanings that reflect Sikh values of equality,

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devotion, and unity (Karaj 2000). The ceremony not only marks the union of two individuals but also signifies their commitment to living a life guided by the teachings of Sikhism.

**Langar or the Roti ceremony (lunch for guests)**

At the Gurdwara, a vegetarian lunch is served to the visitors. Then comes the Roti Ceremony, which symbolises the bride's first meal as a married woman. Her in-laws present the bride with the platter, some cash, and other gifts after covering it with a cloth. This meal is shared by the bride and the groom.

**Post-Wedding Rituals in Sikh Tradition: Celebrating Unity and Community**

The post-wedding rituals in Sikh tradition are a continuation of the grand celebration of unity and love that begins with the Anand Karaj ceremony. These rituals hold deep cultural and religious significance, integrating the newly married couple into the Sikh community and emphasizing the importance of family bonds.

**Doli Ceremony (Departure of the Bride)**

The bride leaves her parents' house to begin her new life with her husband's family, which is symbolized by the doli ceremony. The bride leaves her family behind and sets off on a new journey in this moment that is both joyful and emotional. In this ritual, music, blessings, and heartfelt farewells are exchanged as the bride is carried by her family members to a doli, a decked palanquin or automobile.

The doli ceremony emphasizes the value of familial relationships in culture and the handing over of responsibilities from the bride's family to the groom's. It represents the bride's readiness to embrace her new position as her husband's wife and family member.

**Pani Bharna (Welcoming the Newlyweds)**

The newlyweds receive a heartfelt welcome and pour water during the ceremony as they arrive at the groom's home. As the couple enters the groom's home, they are showered with rose petals, water, and milk as part of a custom. It is customary to provide blessings and well wishes to the newlyweds as they start their new life together through this symbolic gesture. Within the Sikh community, Pani Bharna emphasizes the significance of acceptance and hospitality from a cultural and religious standpoint. It highlights how the bride is welcomed into the groom's family as a new member and that they do it with open arms.

### **Chhota Anand Karaj (Small-Scale Ceremony)**

A post-wedding ceremony called Chhota Ananda Karaj (small-scale blissful union) is intended for individuals who were unable to attend the main Ananda Karaj ceremony. Friends, neighbors, and other family members who might not have been present at the wedding can now celebrate the couple's union with them during this short ceremony. The notion that the Sikh community is welcoming and that everyone celebrates a couple's union is furthered by Chhota Anand Karaj. By doing this, it is made sure that everyone can share in the benefits and joys of the newlyweds.

### **Cultural and Religious Significance**

These post-wedding rituals are not just symbolic; they hold profound cultural and religious significance within Sikhism:

- **Family Bonds:** The Doli ceremony signifies the importance of family bonds and the emotional journey of the bride as she transitions to a new phase of life.
- **Hospitality:** Pani Bharna underscores the hospitality and acceptance of the bride into her new family, emphasizing the values of warmth and inclusion.
- **Community Inclusivity:** The Chhota Anand Karaj reinforces the Sikh community's commitment to inclusivity and the celebration of unity, ensuring that all community members are part of the couple's joyous journey.

The post-wedding rituals in Sikh tradition serve as a bridge between the individual union of the bride and groom and their integration into the larger Sikh community. These rituals not only carry cultural and religious significance but also emphasize the values of family, hospitality, and community inclusivity, which are integral to Sikh culture and traditions. They celebrate the couple's union not just as a private affair but as a shared joy within the Sikh community.

### **The Evolution of Sikh Wedding Rituals: Navigating Modernization, Globalization, and Migration**

Deeply ingrained in faith and history, Sikh marriage customs have changed over time to adapt to the shifting social, cultural, and religious landscape within the Sikh community. Migration, globalization, and industrialization have all influenced the evolution, which reflects the adaptability and tenacity of Sikh traditions (Burch 2019).

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### **Modernization and Simplification**

The modernization and urbanization of Sikh communities have led to a tendency of wedding rite simplification and streamlining. Sikh marriages used to be grand events with many rituals and rites that lasted for several days. In order to suit hectic lives and professional commitments, a growing number of families and couples are choosing more accessible and easy weddings these days. The fundamental components of Ananda Karaj are now the center of attention, guaranteeing that spiritual importance is maintained even during the most intense ceremonies.

### **Globalization and Cultural Fusion**

The phenomenon of cultural fusion in wedding rites is a result of Sikh communities being exposed to a wider range of cultures and traditions due to globalization. Nowadays, Sikh brides are increasingly including aspects of their diaspora communities' customs in their weddings. Sikh marriages in Western nations, for instance, could incorporate elements of Western wedding traditions, such a bride and groom or a white bridal dress. This merging of customs is a reflection of Sikh culture's versatility and desire to increase the inclusivity of weddings for families from many backgrounds.

### **Migration and Regional Variation**

Migration patterns have caused differences in Sikh marriage customs between different regions. Sikh immigrants and residents from various parts of India carry with them the traditions and practices of their new communities. Sikhs from Punjab, for instance, could follow distinct marriage traditions than Sikhs from other Indian states. Sikh wedding customs are further enhanced by this diversity, which demonstrates how adaptable Sikh culture is to many local influences (McLoughlin 2005).

### **Emphasis on Gender Equality**

Sikh marriage customs have changed to become more inclusive and egalitarian in response to shifting societal dynamics and a stronger focus on gender equality. Anand Karj in particular emphasizes the equality of the bride and groom by focusing on their shared spiritual path and devotion. The importance of making sure that marital traditions uphold these values of equality and respect is becoming increasingly apparent (L. Kaur 2013).

Over time, Sikh marriage customs have experienced substantial modifications and adjustments due to several factors such as modernization, globalization, migration, interfaith unions, and shifting societal norms. Sikh marriage ceremonies are more

adaptable, inclusive, and represent the many origins and experiences of Sikh communities worldwide, even though the fundamental spiritual significance of Anand Karaj endures. This development demonstrates the Sikh culture and traditions' tenacity and vitality in an ever-evolving environment.

### **The Social Structure Reformation**

In Indian sub-continent The social hierarchy Reformation in the marriage realm started when Guru Amar Das Ji forbade satti, the practise of burning a widow on the funeral pyre of her slain spouse. Guru ji went a step further and promoted widows' remarriage, restoring their social standing and securing their right to a respectable life (DZURGBA 2014). Mass marriages were planned and carried out by Guru Amar Das in an effort to promote simplicity and financial savings for wedding rituals. Next in line to be questioned was the dowry system, which Guru Ram Das Ji revised and rejected the notion of accepting material gifts, viewing its acceptance as egotism. As mentioned in sacred script

*“ Har prabh mere Baabulaa Har devahu daan mai daajo ”*

Oh, my dad! Give me the Lord's Naam as my dowry or wedding present.

Any additional dowry that the Manmukhs place on display is nothing more than false egotism and a deceptive display (of lying). Oh, my dad! As my wedding gift or dowry, give me the Lord's Naam (Gur-Giaan, Aatam-Giaan, and Shabad-Giaan) (Talib 1987).

The bride and groom are now on an equal social footing as a result of the dowry system's rejection. This also elevates the bridegroom's status because it shows that he has the resources to support a family and dispels the misconception that he is just an expensive item. Unfortunately, the dowry system still exists today because Sikhs still use it and view it as part of their cultural history.

### **Regional Variations in Sikh Wedding Rituals Across Punjab: A Tapestry of Diversity**

The region of Punjab, encompassing both India and Pakistan, is a land rich in cultural diversity and historical significance. Sikh wedding rituals, while sharing core elements, do exhibit regional variations influenced by local customs, traditions, and historical context. Here, researcher explore some of the regional nuances in Sikh wedding rituals within both Indian and Pakistani Punjab:

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## **Indian Punjab**

### **a. Majha Region**

- **Phulkari Tradition:** The phulkari heritage is highly valued in the Majha region of Punjab, India, particularly in places like Amritsar, Ludhiana, and Jalandhar. Known for its vivid and detailed embroidery, phulkari is used to make bridal clothing such as chunis, or bridal shawls. It gives the wedding a distinctively cultural flavor and is frequently passed down through the generations.

### **b. Malwa Region**

- **Sehra Bandi:** In several locations in the Malwa region, such as Patiala and Bathanda, the groom is customarily covered in a sahra, which is a flower- or bead-made veil. Family members tie this veil at the Sehra Bandi ceremony before the groom departs for the wedding location.

### **c. Doaba Region**

- **Doli Custom:** There is a peculiar ceremony in the Doaba region, which includes Jalandhar and Hoshiarpur, where the bride leaves her parents' home wearing a decked doli (palanquin). Traditionally, hirers or family members carry doilies, setting a lovely atmosphere for the leaving.

## **Pakistani Punjab**

### **a. Lahore Region:**

- **Traditional Music:** Traditional Punjabi folk music, such as gidha and bhangra, is frequently incorporated into Sikh wedding celebrations in and around Lahore. These exuberant acts give the festivities a vibrant and happy quality.

### **b. Rawalpindi/Islamabad Region**

- **Elegant Attire:** In the Rawalpindi/Islamabad area, the bride and husband are expected to dress elegantly and sophisticatedly. Particularly the bridal dress is renowned for its fine craftsmanship and elaborate embroidery.

### **c. Multan Region**

- **Ceremonial Sword:** It is traditional for the groom to lead the wedding procession with a ceremonial sword in several areas of Multan and its surroundings. It represents her dual responsibilities as the family's defender and bride. It is crucial to remember that these regional differences could change over time and are not static.

Furthermore, Sikh weddings abroad frequently include cultural features from their home countries, resulting in a lovely fusion of traditions and customs. While preserving the unifying spirit of Sikhism which promotes equality, unity, and the spiritual marriage of couples through the Anand Karj ceremony these regional variations represent the cultural diversity within Punjab.

### **Preserving Sikh Wedding Rituals: Guardians of Cultural Heritage and Unity**

By exploring Sikh marriage customs in Punjab, which spans both Pakistan and India, the researcher has identified regional and cultural variance within the Sikh population. These rites are more than just traditions. They are manifestations of profound cultural and social significance that draw attention to the principles, doctrines, and background of Sikhism.

#### **Key Findings**

1. **Diversity Within Unity:** Sikh wedding rituals exhibit rich regional diversity, with each part of Punjab contributing its unique customs and traditions. From the Phulkari tradition in Majha to the Sehra Bandi in Malwa and the Doli customs in Doaba, these regional variations add depth to the cultural fabric of Punjab.
2. **Interplay of Tradition and Modernity:** Sikh wedding rituals have evolved over time to adapt to changing social and global dynamics. While modernization and globalization have simplified some aspects of these rituals, they continue to be a powerful embodiment of Sikh values, emphasizing equality, community, and spirituality.
3. **Interfaith and Multicultural Marriages:** In an increasingly interconnected world, Sikh weddings have accommodated interfaith marriages, leading to adaptations that respect the diverse beliefs of couples. This inclusivity reflects the Sikh commitment to harmony and unity.
4. **Family Bonds and Hospitality:** Sikh wedding rituals emphasize the importance of family bonds, hospitality, and community inclusivity. The Doli ceremony symbolizes the emotional journey of the bride, while Pani Bharna underscores the warm welcome of the newlyweds. These values continue to be the bedrock of Sikh culture.

#### **Preservation and Understanding**

Preserving and comprehending Sikh marriage customs is essential for maintaining cultural legacy and fostering intergenerational continuity. These rites are living manifestations of Sikh identity and ideals, not only customs. By keeping them intact, we can make sure that the next generation may continue Sikhism's history



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and maintain a connection to their cultural heritage. People can gain a deeper appreciation for Sikh heritage and the values of equality, unity, and spirituality that form the foundation of Sikhism by learning about the cultural and social significance of these rites. Additionally, it fosters a feeling of solidarity and kinship among Sikh communities across the globe, overcoming cultural and regional divides (DZURGBA 2014).

**The Process of Marriage Registration Across the border  
Pakistan Punjab**

There are about 30,000 Sikhs living in Pakistan, although they are not subject to specific marriage regulations that differ from Sikh customary laws. Sometimes it seems as though their distinct identity is constantly in danger, which is a flagrant violation of Article 36 of the 1973 Constitution. Thus, the Punjab Assembly passed the historical Punjab Sikh Anand Karaj Marriage Act 2018 in response to the Sikh community's persistent desire and demand to create separate laws for the solemnization, registration, and celebration of Sikh marriages in accordance with Sikh customary laws. This was marked as a historical development, especially for the Sikh community, which has been fighting for separate laws in accordance with their separate religious laws regarding solemnization, registration, and celebration throughout the world.

Unexpectedly, the bill repealed the Anand Marriage Act of 1909, which had been in place since the time of the British Empire. The Anand Marriage Act of 1909 did not legalize the registration of Sikh weddings, nor did it address the question of when men and women reach puberty. This legal loophole was filled by the Punjab Sikh Anand Karj Marriage Act of 2017, which is a significant piece of legislation that safeguards Pakistani minorities' fundamental rights in line with their religious beliefs. For the past five years, the Sikh community has been waiting for the Act to be implemented; however, the specifics of how it would be done are still being worked out.

**Indian Punjab**

During the period of British colonial administration in India, the Anand Marriage Act of 1909 was a significant turning point as it formally acknowledged Anand Karaj as a respectable type of union within the Sikh community. But when independence finally arrived in 1947, things started to shift in the judicial system. Sikh marriages were brought into compliance with the broader legal framework governing marriages in India in 1955 when the Hindu Marriage Act was extended to cover them, But it was becoming more and more obvious that Anand Karj's special needs necessitated certain legal measures. In 2012, Parliament amended the original Anand Marriage Act in response to ongoing demands from the Sikh

community. (piyush 2023). This amendment aimed to address the distinctive aspects of Sikh marriages and provide them with the legal recognition and protection they deserved.

In 2017, the central government, led by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), took further measures to guarantee the successful implementation of the Anand Marriage Act amendment. The modified law mandated that all state governments establish rules and regulations that maintain the sanctity of Sikh weddings and reinforce the commitment to do so. It is noteworthy that the Sikh community in Indian Punjab still encounters difficulties getting marriage licenses, even though they make up the majority of the population. For Sikh couples, the marriage registration process has become more complicated and challenging due to the lack of comprehensive legislation that takes into account their distinct customs.

Given the aforementioned issues, it is imperative that the government take into account the worries and requirements of the Sikh community in order to expedite and simplify the marriage registration procedure. In addition to defending the rights of the Sikh community, acknowledging the significance of Anand Karj in Sikh culture and eliminating the legal obstacles associated with it will encourage cultural diversity and inclusiveness in India's legal system.

## **Conclusion**

The study undertakes a thorough investigation into the various facets of Sikh marriage customs, offering a thorough comprehension of its legal, cultural, and religious components. This study sheds light on the intricate network of customs, religious convictions, and legal structures that influence Sikh marriage ceremonies, all within the complex sociocultural fabric of Punjab, which is shared by Pakistan and India. These customs, which are ingrained in Sikh culture, provide as a potent prism through which to view more expansive manifestations of Sikh identity, communal harmony, and official acknowledgement.

The interdisciplinary nature of the investigation is among its most significant contributions. Through the integration of legal analysis and ethnographic observations, the research surpasses the constraints of a solitary discipline. This all-encompassing method has made it possible to comprehend Sikh marriage customs in a deeper and more thorough way, bringing forth their richness and diversity. The historical development of these rituals is also traced in the article, providing insightful information about how different external factors like modernization, globalization, and migration have changed them.

This study's emphasis on the legal system controlling Sikh weddings in Punjab, both in Pakistan and India, is another noteworthy feature. The Anand Marriage Acts of India and Pakistan are two examples of the legislative acts and modifications that are thoroughly examined in this study. This legal analysis helps us comprehend how the state recognizes and defends these distinctive marital customs, making it more than just an intellectual exercise. The study makes the

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case that these legal tools have cultural and social importance in addition to being legal conventions, giving Sikh weddings validity and protection.

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